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COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Non-confidential list of communications concerning the status of women

Note by the Secretary-General

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1-3	2
SUMMARY OF NON-CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF WOMEN	4-14	2
A. Communications concerning the status of women received by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat	4-7	2
B. Communications concerning the status of women received by the specialized agencies, the United Nations Secretariat (including the regional commissions) and other United Nations bodies	8-14	3

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to present a non-confidential list of communications concerning the status of women, submitted in accordance with the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 76(V), as amended by Council resolution 304 I (XI), and of Council resolution 1983/27.

2. The list contains communications received by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat during the period 1984-1985 and by the specialized agencies, regional commissions and other United Nations bodies, together with information on action that may have been undertaken following receipt of such communications.

3. The communications deal with principles that relate to the promotion of women's rights in the political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. They are organized into the following two categories:

(a) Communications concerning the status of women in the political field;

(b) Communications concerning the status of women in the social and cultural fields.

SUMMARY OF NON-CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

A. Communications concerning the status of women received by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

1. Communications concerning the status of women in the political field

4. Communications dated 9 July 1984 were received from Women for Peace, International Workshop for the Future, Dortmund, Federal Republic of Germany, signed by 78 individuals, welcoming the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, and requesting the United Nations to support their proposal for an extension of the United Nations Decade for Women until the year 2000, or at least for another 10 years, in order to have more time to understand force in all its manifestations and causes and to work on the elimination of those causes, which were preventing attainment of the Decade's objectives. The writers were in favour of the resolutions on the United Nations Decade for Women but asked the United Nations to support their proposal for the resolutions to be supplemented by a timetable for realizing the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women that would include the abolition of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

5. A communication dated 13 September 1984 was received from Klara S. Brunner, United States of America, requesting that the United Nations Decade for Women be extended to the year 2000 in view of the fact that women had contributed to keeping the world out of a holocaust until the present time and in order to disarm those who were determined to lead the world into a third world war, which would destroy mankind.

6. A communication dated 3 October 1984 was received from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, California Branch, United States of America, signed by 10 individuals, in which the League recognized the important opportunities for women to hold dialogues about equality, development and peace provided by the United Nations Decade for Women and the

important advances women had made for world peace in the 10 years of the Decade, and furth[illegible] recognized the current perilous situation of the world and requested that the United Nations Decade for Women should be extended to the year 2000.

2. Communications concerning the status of women in the social and cultural fields

7. A communication was received on 24 July 1984 from Barbara Kohse, Federal Republic of Germany, complaining that the United Nations was not doing even the minimum to stop the many violations of human rights, including those with a "cultural" background, that were being inflicted upon women. She questioned the justification for the Organization if its main goal was merely to seek the lowest common denominator whereby no-one would be hurt, and to endeavour to ensure that women in development projects were given the same health care as men and that women's position in society would not worsen as a result of such projects. The author requested the Secretariat to combat strenuously the sexual mutilation of women, their sexual slavery, the practice of "purdah", the abuse of gynaecological methods for eliminating female embryos and the inferior nutritive and health care of women and girls. If the United Nations did not intend to commit itself, it could only qualify as an "alibi organization" and it had better be dissolved. Violence against women was a normative practice in all societies. The submitting author encouraged the United Nations to fight against that evil. If, however, the Organization kept quiet, one could accuse it of complicity in the matter.

B. Communications concerning the status of women received by the specialized agencies, the United Nations Secretariat (including the regional commissions) and other United Nations bodies

8. The Department of International, Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/27, notified the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other United Nations bodies of the Council's request that the reports on confidential and non-confidential communications on the status of women should include communications received by the specialized agencies, regional commissions and other United Nations bodies. The following offices or bodies were asked to forward to the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat copies of any communications received concerning the status of women, together with information on subsequent action that might have been taken:

Specialized agencies

International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC)

United Nations Secretariat and United Nations bodies

Centre against Apartheid, Centre for Human Rights, Division for Palestinian Rights, Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, United Nations Social Defence Research Institute, World Food Council (WFC), World Food Programme (WFP)

Regional commissions

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

9. The following replied that they had received no non-confidential communications concerning the status of women:

Specialized agencies

ILO, FAO, ICAO, IMF, IMO, IFAD

United Nations Secretariat and United Nations bodies

Centre for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), United Nations Social Defence Research Institute

Regional commission

ESCAP

10. UNIDO explained that the status of women was not included in its mandate as a specific topic, and the Organization had therefore not received any communications dealing with the subject. The improvement of the status of women was nevertheless integrated into the projects providing technical assistance to industries in developing countries, including those that were particularly oriented towards requirements or the employment of women.

11. WFP forwarded a copy of an information paper that it had prepared for the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, describing the support given by WFP to rural women

during the Decade. It also sent a copy of the April-June 1985 issue of the World Food Programme News, which was largely devoted to the subject of women and WFP.

12. UNESCO stated that during the previous two years the following member States had submitted special reports to the Director-General regarding non-confidential communications concerning the status of women, in which they assessed the progress made in achieving the goals of the Decade for Women: Barbados, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Guyana, India, Iraq, Ireland, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan and Sudan. UNESCO annexed to its letter a copy of the Director-General's report on the Organizations's contribution towards improving the status of women (23 C/18), which was to be submitted to the General Conference at its twenty-third session, held at Sofia in October and November 1985. The report contained an account of UNESCO activities in support of equality between women and men, and dealt with women's participation in development, with the role of women in strengthening peace, with international co-operation in the field of the advancement of women, with public information activities and with the situation of women in the UNESCO secretariat.

13. WHO reported that it had no formal mechanisms to deal with communications concerning the status of women.

14. ITU forwarded a report by the Secretary-General on professional equality between men and women (Administrative Council document 6341-E of 2 July 1985 (CA 40-91)) and the summary record of the fourth and last Meeting of Committee 2, 1/ at which one of the subjects discussed was professional equality between men and women.

1/ Administrative Council document 6379-E (CA 40-129) of 18 July 1985.